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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001435

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR WILLIAMS/SHAMPAINE/BELGRADE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/WATERS; TREASURY FOR SZUBIN/LOEFFLER/NUGENT/HIRSON

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TAGS: EAGR EAID ETRD IS JA JO KWBG

SUBJECT: JAPANESE AGRICULTURE ASSISTANCE IN JORDAN VALLEY

REF: 2006 JERUSALEM 1428

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Japan International Cooperation Agency's (JICA) Jordan Valley agricultural development initiative began in March 2007 with a technical assistance program and two feasibility studies scheduled to run 18-22 months. The technical assistance program will train Palestinian farmers and Agriculture Ministry extension agents in best practices and techniques, while the water resource management feasibility study will look at improving spring water conveyance systems, rehabilitating agricultural wells, and fresh water harvesting. The feasibility study for the trilateral Agribusiness Industrial Park will decide the location and scope of the Park's operations. Funding has not yet been secured for the Park's actual construction. End summary.

Agriculture Training Program
To Begin End-July

¶2. (SBU) JICA West Bank/Gaza Deputy Resident Representative Iwasaki Akihiro said July 9 that JICA's three agricultural projects in the Jordan Valley were launched in late March 2007 after Israeli, Jordanian, Palestinian, and Japanese representatives agreed to a "Corridor of Peace and Prosperity" in the Jordan Valley. Akihiro said that the JICA agricultural technical assistance program, which will run until May 2010 in association with the PA Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), will start training agricultural extension agents and then farmers. A demonstration farm in the southern Jordan Valley is planned, but its size and location is still under discussion.

Water Resource Management
Feasibility Study

¶3. (SBU) Akihiro said that JICA's 22-month water resource management feasibility study, in association with the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA), will focus on three areas: (1) an improved spring water conveyance system for Palestinian farmers in the southern Jordan Valley; (2) the rehabilitation of one quarter of the 29 agricultural wells in the Jordan Valley; and (3) freshwater harvesting.

Agrobusiness Industrial Park

¶4. (SBU) According to Akihiro, Japan's trilateral (Palestinian, Israeli, and Jordanian) initiative in the Jordan Valley involves a feasibility study for an Agribusiness Industrial Park, in association with the PA Ministry of National Economy. JICA's 18-month feasibility study is scheduled for completion in November 2008 and should determine the Park's proposed location, scope, and estimated cost, according to Akihiro. JICA may allow other non-agricultural industries to make use of the Industrial Park, but no final decisions have been made in that regard, he added. Akihiro noted that Japanese funding for the construction of the Park has not been identified but he believes it will likely be secured.

Japan Remains Largely Uncommitted
To Associated Projects

¶5. (C) Akihiro said that his government continues discussions with the PA, GOJ, and GOI concerning options to improve other Jordan Valley infrastructure, including West Bank crossings to Jordan, to facilitate quick passage of Palestinian-grown produce to Jordan for export. He stressed that Japan has not committed to funding any specific infrastructure project, such as a Jordan Valley airport, despite recent press reports implying the contrary.

WALLES